

MEXICO, 1994

Here we are, the dead. We die again, but this time to truly live.

To the Mexican people:
To the peoples and governments of the world:
Brothers and Sisters:
Since Jan. 1 of this year, our Zapatista troops began a series of politico-military actions with the principal objective of letting the Mexican people and the world know the miserable conditions that millions of Mexican, especially the Indigenous people, live and die in. With these actions, we also let people know our decision to fight for our elementary rights in the only way that the government authorities have left us: armed struggle.....
General Command of the Indigenous Revolutionary Glandestine Committee of the Eje 10to Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), from the mountains of Southeastern Mexico. January, 6, 1994.



ZAPATISTAS

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



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ZAPATISTAS

N THEIR OWN WORDS
INTERVIEW WITH MARCOS

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LOVE AND RAGE

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THE ECOLOGIST

The introduction in this pamphlet was taken from an Editorial in the Ecologist Magazine. The ecologist comes out every other month writing about ecological issues. The Ecologist runs a campaign pull out that does a good job of keeping up to date with international green campaigns.

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Extracts from **MANIFESTO TO MEXICANS**, issued by Emiliano Zapata and signed by him and thirty five officers, August 1914.

The Revolutionary moment has reached its culminating point, and it is time, therefore, for the country to know the truth.

The existing revolution did not make itself for the purposes of satisfying the interests of one personality, of any one group or of any one party. The existing revolution recognises that its origins lie deeper and that it is pursuing higher finalities.

The peasant was hungry, was enduring misery, was suffering from exploitation, and if he rose in arms it was to obtain the bread greed of the rich denied him, to make himself master of the land the egotistic landowner kept for himself, to vindicate dignity the slave driver iniquitously trampled on daily. He threw himself into revolt, not to conquer illusionary political rights which do not feed him, but to procure for himself a piece of land which must supply him with food and liberty, a happy fireside and a future of independence and growth.

The first task, that of making it impossible for the reactionary group to be any danger, is carried out by two different methods: by the exemplary punishment of the chiefs, of the great criminals, of the intellectual directors and active elements of the conservative faction, and by attacking the pecuniary resources they employ to work up intrigues and provoke revolutions; that is to say by the subdivision of the properties of the Hacienda owners and politicians who have put themselves at the front of the organised resistance to the popular movement which began in 1910 and has attained its crowning point in 1914.



The second task that of creating powerful interests akin to the revolution and in solidarity with it, will be brought to a happy conclusion when the natives, individually and in their communities, receive back the innumerable tracts of land of which they have been de-

spoiled by the great landowners. Thus there will be satisfied both the human demand for land and that human appetite for liberty which is making itself felt throughout the Republic as the formidable reply to the savagery of the Hacienda owners which has maintained, even in the C20 in the heart of free America, a system which the most unfortunate serfs in the Middle Ages would hardly have endured.

It is certain that the deluded believe that the country is going to be contented (as it was contented in 1910) with an electoral pantomime,

from which are to arise new and apparently honest men who are to occupy the cruel chairs, the seats in the Legislature, and the presidents lofty thrones.

The country people wish to live the life of cultivation: to breathe the air of economic liberty which as yet they have not known; and this they never can do while there still remains on foot the traditional lord of the scaffold and the knife, who disposes at whim the persons of his labours, an extortioner of wages, who annihilates them with excessive tasks, brutalises them by misery and ill treatment, dwarfs and exhausts his race by the slow agony of slavery and the enforced withering of human beings whose stomachs and empty brains are very hungry.

ZAPATISTAS

INTRODUCTION

At midnight on the 1st of January 1994, NAFTA - The North American Free Trade Agreement between Mexico, the US and Canada - came into force. Barely two hours later, thousands of Indians armed with machetes, clubs and a few guns occupied four of the major towns in the Chiapas, a province on Mexico's southern border with Guatemala, and declared war on the Mexican government. Two dozen police and an unknown number of rebels died in the assault.

The following day, Mexican President Carlos Salinas dismissed the uprising as the work of "A local group of professionals of violence, probably foreigners" and launched a massive attack upon the rebels using tanks, Swiss aeroplanes, US helicopters and 15,000 troops. Nobody knows the full extent of the violence that followed,

but there were reports of civilian killings, unlawful detentions, torture and summary executions.

The rebels soon revealed however that they were Indians of different ethnic groups calling themselves Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (EZLN). Rebelling not only against the president and the army, they appealed for an end to 500 years of oppression and 40 years of development. They wanted to reclaim their commons and to regenerate their own forms of governance. It was time to say "Basta", Enough!

Within a few days of the rebellion, opposition groups all over Mexico came out in support, many adding their own political demands to the agenda. People occupied the streets, broke decades of press control, and gained access to wide communication networks both inside and outside

Mexico. All the EZLN declarations concerning freedom, justice and democracy were broadcast to the outside world through fax and electronic mail as soon as they were released.

In the face of mounting opposition at home and abroad, and in an attempt to restore its tarnished image, the government had little choice but to change course. The president called a ceasefire and made a number of political concessions: changes in the cabinet, the removal of the inept governor of the Chiapas, the establishment of investigatory commissions and committees, a pledge to ensure 'cleaner' presidential elections in August and - of course - the promise of tons of money to everyone in Chiapas, particularly the rebels.

Chiapas is one of Mexico's richest provinces. Its oil, gas, hydroelectric dams, timber, honey, corn and other resources support the Mexican economy; yet Chiapas is one of the poorest provinces. One third of its 3.5 million inhabitants are long suffering Indians, 30,000 died last year of hunger and associated diseases in the area of the uprising. Over the last few years the drive to exploit the resources of the area has compounded oppression to the level of genocide.

The revolt was not a response to a lack of development - a call for cheaper food, more jobs, more health care and more education - or to poverty and misery. It was a dignified reaction to too much development. It arose because people opted for a more dignified form of dying.

Rather than demanding the expansion of the economy, the EZLN wish to expel it from their domain. Within their traditional forms of governance, they keep alive their own life support systems based on self reliance and mutual help, informal networks for the direct exchange of goods, services and information, and administration of justice which calls for compensation more than punishment.

The movement takes up from the long tradition of peasant and Indian rebellions that have had such an influence on Mexico's history: to Panco Villa, who inspired the EZLN's military strategy, and Emiliano Zapata. Villa and Zapata are renowned not simply for occupying the Presidential Palace at the head of victorious peasant armies in the 1920's, but also for immediately abandoning it because they did not want to seize power and govern the country, but only to reclaim the peasant commons.

Gustavo Esteva. *

* See back page for reference.

fore, according to this declaration of war, we give our military forces the EZLN, the following orders:

FIRST: Advance to the capital of the country, overcoming the Mexican federal army, protecting in our advance the civilian population and permitting the people in the liberated area the right to freely and democratically elect their own administrative authorities.

SECOND: Respect the lives of our prisoners and turn over all wounded to the international red cross.

THIRD: Initiate summary judgments against all soldiers of the Mexican federal army, who we accuse of being traitors to our country, and the political police that have received training or have been paid by foreigners and against all those who have repressed and treated badly the civil population and robbed and stolen from or attempted against the good of the people.

FORTH: Form new troops with all those that show their interest in joining our struggle, including those that, being enemy soldiers, turn themselves in without having fought against us, and promise to take orders from the general command of the Zapatista Army of national liberation.

FIFTH: We ask for the unconditional surrender of the enemies headquarters before we begin any combat to avoid any loss of lives.

SIXTH: Suspend the robbery of our natural resources in the areas controlled by the EZLN. To the people of Mexico: We, the men and women, full and free, are conscious that the war that we have declared is our last resort, but also a just one. The dictators are applying an undeclared genocidal war against our people for many years. Therefore we ask for your participation, your decision to support this plan that struggles for work, land housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace. We declare that we will not stop fighting until the basic demands of our people have been met by forming

a government of our country that is free and democratic.

JOIN THE INSURGENT FORCES OF THE ZAPATISTAS!

General command of the EZLN 1993

The following is an extract of a Zapatista communique 6 January 1994

Losses suffered by Zapatistas: 9 dead and 20 seriously wounded who are being cared for in our campaign hospitals.

Losses suffered by enemy forces (including police and federal soldiers): 27 dead 40 wounded and 180 prisoners who surrendered to our forces and were later freed with no harm done to their physical beings. There are at least 30 more dead that have not been confirmed. These losses in addition to an undetermined number of wounded, occurred on January 4 in the mountains south of San Cristobal de las Casas when bombs dropped by Mexican Air Force planes fell on army soldier trucks which were operating in the zone.

Destroyed or damaged enemy war materials: 3 helicopters and 3 artillery planes, 15 radios, 15 transport vehicles, 4 state judicial torture centres.

Freed prisoners: 230 in four jails which were attacked and freed by EZLN forces.

Recuperated war supplies: Approximately 207 arms of different calibers (M16, G3, M2, pistols, fine lances, and shotguns) and an undetermined number of depots. 1,266 kilograms of dynamite and 10,000 TNT detonators. More than 20 transport vehicles.

WE WILL NOT PUT DOWN OUR ARMS! WE WANT JUSTICE, NOT PARDON OR CHARITY!

TODAY WE SAY ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

to the people of Mexico 15/10/94

Mexican brothers and sisters: We are a product of 500 years of struggle: first against slavery, then during the war of independence against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil, and later the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz denied us the just application of the reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and Zapata emerged, poor men just like us. We have been denied the most basic social services so they can use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our country. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no food nor education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children.

But today we say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. We are the heirs of the true builders of our nation. The dispossessed, we are millions and we thereby call upon our brothers and our sisters to join this struggle as the only path, so that we will not die of hunger due to the insatiable ambition of a 70 year dictatorship led by a clique of traitors that represent the most conservative and sell-out groups. They are the same ones that opposed Hidalgo and Morelos, the same ones that imported a European prince to rule our country, the same ones that sold half our country to the foreign invader, the same ones that formed the "scientific" Porfirista dictatorship, the same ones that massacred the railroad workers in 1958 and the students in 1968, the same ones that today take everything from us, absolutely everything. To prevent the continuation of the above and as our last hope, after having tried to utilize all legal means based on our consti-

tution, we go, to our Constitution, to apply Article 39 which says: "National sovereignty essentially and originally resides in the people. All political power emanates from the people and its purpose is to help the people. The people have at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government."

Therefore, according to our constitution, we declare the following to the Mexican federal army, the pillar of the Mexican dictatorship that we suffer from, monopolised by a one party system and led by Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the maximum and illegitimate federal executive that today holds power. According to this declaration of war, we ask that other powers of the nation advocate to restore the legitimacy and stability of the nation by overthrowing the dictator. We also ask that international organizations and the international Red Cross watch over and regulate our battles, so that our efforts are carried out while still protecting our civilian population. We declare now and always that we are subject to the Geneva Accord, forming the EZLN as our fighting arm of our liberation struggle. We have the Mexican people on our side, we have the beloved tri coloured flag highly respected by our insurgent fighters.

We use black and red in our uniform as our symbol of our working people on strike. Our flag carries the following letters "EZLN" Zapatista Army of National Liberation, and we always carry our flag into combat. Beforehand, we refuse any effort to disgrace our just cause by accusing us of being drug traffickers, drug guerrillas, thieves, or other names that might be used by our enemies. Our struggle follows the constitution which is held high by its call for justice and equality. There-

** Topic: Interview with Marcos May 11, 1994 **

** Written 2:16 am Jun 17, 1994 by igc:resist in gn:reg.mexico **

Interview with Subcomandante Marcos,

Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Army) Wednesday, May 11, 1994 Somewhere in la Selva Lacandona (the Lacandon Jungle)

Interviewers: Pablo Salazar Devereaux (Haitian Information Bureau)
Ana Laura Ilerna'ndez (Amor y Rabia/México) Eugenio Aguilera
(Nightcrawlers Anarchist Black Cross) Gustavo Rodri'guez (Amor y Rabia/México)

Special thanks to Robin Flinchum and Selene Pinti Jaramillo for their help

with the translation.

Interviewers:

Much has been written and said about the Zapatistas, but little concrete is known about your ideology. There are many who are trying to claim your struggle as their own. The Maoists say that you are Maoists; the Trotskyites say that you are Trotskyites and the list goes on . . .

Marcos: The anarchists say that we are anarchists . . .

Interviewers: No, we have never been able to say for sure [laughter]. We need proof. However, you have insisted that you are Zapatistas. Even now we remember the words of an EZLN Major who affirmed:

"We are not Marxists, nor are we guerrillas. We are Zapatistas and we are an army." Anti-authoritarianism is felt in each of your words and actions, in the manner in which you are organized, in the structure of the Clandestine Committees, in the collective participation (within the EZLN). In Mexico, the only precedents for your actions and attitudes go back precisely to

those whose names you constantly evoke: Zapata and Mago'n. Has Magonismo permeated your ideology?

Marcos: This is a question?

Interviewers: [laughter]. No, a presentation.

Marcos: I thought it was a speech.

Interviewers: No, no, a presentation.

Marcos: Well then, I'm going to explain. The EZLN was born having as points of reference the political-military organizations of the guerrilla movements in Latin America during the sixties and seventies. That is to say, political-military structures with the central aim of overthrowing a regime and the taking of power by the people in general. When the first group of the EZLN arrived here, to the jungles of Chiapas, it was a very small group with this political-military structure that I am talking about. It began to adapt itself to the surroundings, to try to survive - that is to say, to permeate the territory, to make it survivable. But, above all, it began to forge in the

combatant, in that initial group of combatants, the physical and ideological strength needed for the guerrilla process. I mean by this that the mountains served as a school for cadres, inflexible and constant day and night. But things were taking shape. In this period there weren't cameras, there weren't recorders, there wasn't any press, nor were there military actions. The only thing that let us stick to the mountains and endure is hope, because there isn't any payment. I'm not referring to monetary payment, of course there never was any of that, but to some moral payment, to something that would serve as some sort of assurance that it is all worth it. Ten years ago, we were clinging to the hope that everything that we were learning, with much suffering and many problems, was going to have results someday. In that period, there is a double learning process: the learning process of the mestizos (the inhabitants of this area call everyone who lives in the city "mestizo") and the process of the indigenous peoples. The process of the indigenous people includes learning the very basics - to speak Castilian (Spanish), the history of Mexico, reading and writing, basic notions of mathematics, geography, biology, chemistry - in all, everything that we mestizos have as our basic culture. And we for our part had to learn and understand not only the world view of the indigenous peoples of this zone, but also learn a series of physical aptitudes that are not innate to the indigenous peoples, but that they learn when they are small: to handle a machete, to carry large loads over long distances, to reduce their food intake to the minimum required - in this case corn and sugar. In this interplay, this exchange, this give and take, we both went to the mountains changed. What I mean is that for the indigenous people the mountains are something sacred, something special, something

magical and ultimately something terrible. No, the indigenous peoples do not go to the mountains. In fact, when we entered the mountains, many of them feared that something would happen to them before they could accomplish anything. The mountains are the place of the dead, of the gods, of good gods and bad gods, and because of this there was nobody who had experienced, not even on their part, life in the mountains. The indigenous people were only used to living in their villages, to going hunting, to searching for land where they could plant. We should talk about this "romantic vision," if you understand me, of guerrilla war, with its references to grandiose military actions: the taking of power and triumph, all of those things that could be references to the triumphant guerrilla wars of that era, the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. The environment brings you back to reality and makes you understand that all revolutions have a cost and only those who are disposed to pay it can carry out the revolution. To begin with, in that time you had to be crazy or stupid to try to carry it out. I think that we were both stupid and crazy. There was nothing that would tell us that we were fine and that the venture was going to have a future or that it had a chance. There was the fact that we had tried to bring about change - not necessarily revolutionary change - by other methods and in different places. But all our struggles, our struggles in the university, peasant struggles, workers' struggles coalesced with the State, with Power. It is better to speak about Power, because there are places in which the action of the State is not perfectly definable as such and it makes more sense to speak of Power - in this case, the Power of a dominant class that spreads to other areas, culture for example. Then you arrive at the conclusion, intuitively or scientifically, that another road is necessary, the road of armed struggle. We then

mended when... as a contraceptive, not for sexual hygiene.

Interviewers: Well, in case that this kind of sexual education could be resumed... do you believe that it would be acceptable that the problem of disease, in the case of AIDS, etcetera, be included in the instruction?

Marcos: I believe so. Let's say that we understand, for example, about AIDS. Well, according to the information that we were getting when we were in the mountains AIDS is a homosexuals' disease, and therefore, if you weren't a homosexual, nothing would happen to you. In fact, we just found that you can get AIDS in other ways, it can be transmitted even in heterosexual relationships. I am talking about the basic sexual culture here, because in this case all references to AIDS are in the context of homosexuality: "If I'm not homosexual I have nothing to worry about." The main worry here is different: "What I have to worry about is to not get anyone pregnant, or that no one gets me pregnant." No, we don't have a sexual culture based on fear of disease due to our isolation, but yes, we do need educate about it.

Interviewers: Well, let's relate this to another question... We want to ask another question relating to immediate solidarity. Have you received or do you have access to condoms? Would it be feasible to bring them?

Marcos: Yes, but unfortunately they would be very hard to eat [Laughs]. But yes, we do get contraceptives, condoms and all that.

Interviewers: So, as I was saying... Marcos: These things are allowed through by the Mexican army so that the Zapatistas don't reproduce [Laughs]. They have enough problems with the ones that already exist for us to make even more.

Interviewers: Now, relating the an-

swers with other questions... One of the questions that we were asked to ask by companion Marcos and Robin is what the EZLN's policy, in the army and in the liberalized communities, toward sexual preference, in this specific case, homosexuality and lesbianism. Is the EZLN given the "satianization" of homosexuality that has sometimes been found in other leftist groups? Or is it simply unknown what you are talking about when you attempt to address these issues?

Marcos: No, let's say that at a level well, of basic culture, it is not punished. mean, they don't say, "He's a homosexual put him in jail, kill him." On one hand, they laugh, make jokes, but homosexuals have a normal life in the community. Our position as an army is that - let me put it you in a general way - there are many minorities that will have to say, "Enough enough!" Just as the indigenous people said, "Enough is enough!", other minorities not tolerated by the powerful will have to say it also. In that sense, then, there is sexual policy in the Zapatista Army.

Interviewers: That is, there is no law in the communities either - that forbids lesbianism or homosexuality.

Marcos: No.

Interviewers: Not even in the army?

Marcos: No, not even in the army.

Interviewers: There is no policy in the army that says, "We found two girls fucking or two guys fucking," and well, they are jailed, suspended, expelled - I don't know...

Marcos: No, there is nothing like that. They go ask the commanders, the same as when it is a male-female couple. That means, they let us know they are not going to be at their posts, because that is what the commanders are concerned about, that their position is covered.

** End of text from gn:reg.mexico **

women could organize as women of the army but also autonomously as women. By this we mean self-help collectives where they could gain and acquire more knowledge about their bodies, and could even get to the point... for example, in the case of abortions in the first weeks, there are methods that have been proposed by radical women's groups, like abortion by menstrual extraction, one of the first methods for aborting early in the pregnancy. Is autonomy given in this sense or not?

Marcos: No, I didn't know about this method. The situation here is not so advanced. The most we managed to achieve some time ago - when I was captain - many years ago, was to have sex-education classes, explaining the man's body, the woman's body, what was the mechanism of pregnancy, what things were going on in their bodies. This was received with much enthusiasm from the men, and much embarrassment from the women. The men came to see how a woman's body was. For example - look, this town has a power plant project that breaks down all the time, but when it works... some months ago it worked for few days. One of the compan-eros told us, very enthusiastically, that at last he had "seen" his wife. He said, "I finally saw all of her." And they have ten kids. He had ten kids and he didn't know his wife's body. He didn't know his wife's body! Until there was electric light and they thought of making love with the light on, and then yes, he could see everything that was going on. And he talked about it as if it had been his first time. He already had ten children, one of them fully grown, already an insurgent [combatant in the EZLN - translators], an 18 year-old, a member of a combat unit. We organized these classes in order to combat the diseases that afflict the women, so that they understand the necessity of hygiene. It is a problem for them; the men

don't take it into account. They think that when a compan-ero has a urinary-tract infection, from lack of cleanliness for example - or if she has her period - that she is just lazy, that she doesn't want to work. We need to sensitize the men to this so that they understand that a woman's body is not like a man's, in many senses. And that's why we organized these classes. We try in the talks and lectures to address these issues.

Interviewers: Is there an education as far as the use of the condom - not only as a contraceptive but also to avoid diseases, to avoid contracting and spreading them?

Marcos: No, in reality no. In reality, we teach about the condom as a contraceptive when the compan-eros can't use the pill, when they get sick from the pill. There are many who get ill from the pill, they are very young; when they use pills with high oestrogen content they get sick. With all the heavy work they do already they get nauseous, get headaches and all that - it's very hard on them. They can't always get IUDs, the rhythm method is really prehistoric, so then there is the use of condoms. But we should say that the Zapatistas' sexual horizons are very limited. I mean by this that gonorrhoea, and things of this sort... well, we didn't get a chance to catch them in the cities since we fled before attacking the whorehouses. We are in the mountain, we are at war - within the regular troops, I'm saying, it is very, very difficult to spread diseases. In fact, we have not seen one case. And we can instill fear, in fact we did it, and they tell you, "Not me, I have never been with a woman, where am I going to become infected, or in what whorehouse am I going to catch this?" It's more pragmatic in that sense. I am not saying it is good, because I do think that it would be good to promote their use... but no, we haven't done it, I would lie to you if I said that we were doing it. It is recom-

confronted the common belief that an armed revolution was possible in any country other than Mexico. That is to say, Mexico was considered the country of solidarity, but never the country of the revolution. When we proposed a revolution, we were considered heretics among the left. The left said that revolution wasn't Mexico's role, that we were too close to the United States, that the regime in Mexico resembled the European model and that because of this a "revolutionary" change was only possible by electoral methods, by peaceful methods, or, in the most radical scenario, by insurrectional methods. This means that the unarmed masses, with broad mobilizations, would disrupt the economy and create a crisis in the State apparatus, which would then fall and a new government would take power. When we proposed a guerilla war, an armed struggle, we broke with this tradition, a tradition that was very strong during that time. With what was happening in Nicaragua and what was beginning to happen in El Salvador, well... Similar things had always been happening there but they were becoming more intense. The struggle in Guatemala was rejuvenating itself a second time, a third, a fourth. I don't know. Eventually someone said, "And why not here in Mexico?" Immediately, there was a sense of caution, of prudence, as if to say, "Not here, here our role is to help those peoples that are liberating themselves and only later, eventually, Mexico might aspire to revolution." The fact that we broke with this idea implies that we also broke with other theoretical schema. We were always confronted with the mountains. Let's say we survived that first stage, that this first stage was in effect about two things: surviving and beginning our political work. In this initial political work, a connection began to take place between the proposals of the guerilla group, the initial group of

the EZLN, and the communities. This means that there are different expectations of the movement. On one hand, there were those who hoped that armed action would bring about a revolution and a change of power, in this case the fall of the governing party and the ascension of another party, but that in the end it would be the people who took power. On the other hand, there were the more immediate expectations of the indigenous people here. For them, the necessity of armed struggle was more as a form of defence against groups of very violent, aggressive and powerful ranchers. In addition, there was an approaching storm - no, let's not say approaching storm - as if there was a wall, a wall that was the same mountain that separated the jungle from the city and that separated the indigenous peoples from political power. It was this wall that permitted the EZLN to grow so scandalously without anyone realizing to what point it had grown. The indigenous peoples realized the necessity of learning to defend themselves. They had weapons, but they used them only for hunting or to protect their homes from animals or thieves. Then, we found each other and we began to speak in two different languages, but in this common point of necessity of armed struggle a relationship began to develop. They needed military instruction, and we needed the support of a social base. And we thus tried to convince them of the necessity of a broader political project. That didn't occur until elements of the community entered the army. In that moment, the difference between combatant force and civilian force began to disappear until it reached the point you see now when whole communities are Zapatistas, when there is no line that separates the civilians from the Zapatistas. Then, when this began to occur, there began a confrontation, a relationship of convenience, between two ways of making decisions. On one hand,

there was the initial proposal of the EZLN: a completely undemocratic and authoritarian proposal, as undemocratic and authoritarian as an army can be, since an army is the most authoritarian thing in this world and also the most absurd in that one single person can decide the life and death of his subordinates. On the other hand there was the indigenous tradition that before the Conquest was a way of life and that after the Conquest became their only way of surviving. In other words, the communities, isolated, cornered, saw themselves obligated to defend themselves collectively, to live collectively, to govern themselves collectively. Since the internal life of the communities was totally separated from national and local political forces, the important thing was the work done by the communities and because of this a collective government came about. No, it was always there: a way of making decisions in common about problems that affect the entire community. These decisions included decisions about work that had to be done in common, judicial problems at an internal level - because it isn't possible to appeal to judicial power of the State. What I mean to say is that the isolation of the indigenous communities provoked the development of another type of "State," a State to deal with the survival of the collective, of a democratic collective with these two characteristics: The leadership is collective and it is removable. In any moment, if you hold a position in the community (first, the community has to have appointed you independent of your political affiliation), the community can remove you. There isn't a fixed term that you have to complete. The moment that the community begins to see that you are failing in your duties, that you are having problems, they sit you down in front of the community and they begin to tell you what you have done wrong. You defend yourself and finally the

community, the collective, the majority decides what they are going to do with you. Eventually, you will have to leave your position and another will take up your responsibilities. So, on one hand there is this form of organization. I'm going to make a reference so that you understand better - student assemblies. Student assemblies are better as forms of protest or for analysing problems. In the case of the indigenous communities, it is a way of life. On the other hand we have the authoritarian form of the army, of a political-military organization, but a military organization after all. One began to see a confrontation between these modes of decision-making until people from the communities began to join the EZLN and the indigenous form of decision-making began to take precedence. I want you to understand me, we didn't arrive and say, "It is necessary that the collective and democracy guide us." That isn't true, of course. This wasn't our conception. Our conception was vertical: "What is necessary is a group of strong men and women, with ideological and physical strength, with the resistance to carry out this task." Our conception was that we were few but of high quality. Well, I'm not saying that we were of that high quality, but we sure were few. Finally, I can't say exactly when - it's not something that's planned - the moment arrived in which the EZLN had to consult the communities in order to make a decision. At first, we only asked if what we were doing was going to cause problems for the compan-eros. And later, when we left the jungle and entered the mountains, we also entered the assemblies and discussions of the communities. A moment arrives in which you can't do anything without the approval of the people with whom you work. It was something understood by both parties: they understood that we wouldn't do anything without consulting them, and

Code in that respect. The stupidity of this article is based on the argument that this is a position of Samuel Ruiz Garcia, that it evidences the influence of the church on the EZLN, and since the church is against abortion they want it to be penalized. Then, according to the argument, the church directed us to present this law proposal. We have not presented any law proposal or anything of the kind - nor a electoral reform proposal or anything like that either. The proposal says contextually: "We demand that the Penal Code of the state be eliminated." We don't say that it should be reformed or replaced by a more just one. We demand that it be removed because it leaves us no other form of political participation other than taking up arms. That's what it says. I sent a letter to La Jornada because of that stupid article that was published.

Interviewers: Very insidious!

Marcos: Yes. That answers the first question. Question two: the compan-eros not only has the right to terminate the pregnancy, but the organization also has the obligation to provide the means for her to do it with total safety.

Interviewers: Well, that was the third question, you already answered it.

Marcos: If she says, "I have become pregnant" - it could even be that she became pregnant on purpose, not just that the birth-control method failed - "but I don't want it anymore," this is fine, as long as her life is not in danger. I mean, if a certain number of months have gone by it can't be done. Then she can demand by the right of Zapatista law that the EZLN give her the means to terminate the pregnancy under the best health conditions that the EZLN can ensure. It is the obligation of the commanders that she is given these means. If the pregnancy can't be stopped, aborted, then the commanders have to find the way to resolve the problem.

Interviewers: In this case, for free.

Marcos: It is not in the strictest sense control over their bodies and the compan-eros demonstrate this very clearly. "We are not free in this sense because, for example, I can't become pregnant and continue to serve in the army. In this sense I am not free. I am free in that if I am pregnant I can stop the pregnancy, but if I am not pregnant I can't decide to become pregnant, because if I become pregnant I have to leave the army." And yes, we do tell them they have to leave the army, because of the conditions we face. That's why the compan-eros say, "There is no freedom over my own body." In the case of the female combatants it is only half-freedom, the other freedom is lacking. Right now they can't decide to carry a pregnancy to term and remain in the army. It is only fair to point this out, and the compan-eros continue to fight for their right to become pregnant. The other side of the issue has already been resolved for many years and we deal with abortions with the means we have at our disposal. Until now no one has died during an abortion. In the communities abortion is practised to the extent that our resources allow.

Interviewers: Then it exists also for the civilian population, for the women in the civilian community. There is that possibility in case she needs it, if she so wishes.

Marcos: Yes. In general, they don't seek it because of their beliefs; also for health reasons, since in their nutritional conditions an abortion can be deadly. Sometimes it is best to let the pregnancy be carried through, even if there is still time for an abortion. But we do facilitate the use of contraceptives and all that, for example.

Interviewers: The compan-eros we met also had access to contraceptives. The question has been raised of whether there is the possibility for the organization of women's groups within the army where

followed, you have to look after yourself. Only when the army says, "Now it's possible to have children and remain in the mountains or at some positions," only then will it cease to be an issue. But, yes, the nurses are asked to be checking for pregnancy.

Interviewers: Yes, they told us that there is...

Marcos: But there is no formal procedure. You do have to ask the commanders for permission, but it's not as if...

Interviewers: As if it's mandatory to be married to have sex, or anything like that.

Marcos: No, no.

Interviewers: Simply put, it's more a matter of coordination, to...

Marcos: Yes, a military question. You let the commanders know, but generally no, they don't get married to have sex.

Interviewers: They can have sexual relations freely?

Marcos: In fact, they have sex and then they say, "Well, not this one." Or "Yes, this is the one I want to marry. Or maybe I don't want to marry this person, but I just want it to be clear that we are a couple." They say this to avoid gossip - like that he or she gets in bed with one person and then another, and so on.

Interviewers: That involves culture and tradition as well.

Marcos: Yes, we are talking about indigenous people that come from the villages...

Interviewers: Who hold different concepts than we who come from the cities.

Marcos: But it is a rule is that you have to let the commanders know.

Interviewers: Now, when you were explaining this to us, something else came to mind, another question. You spoke of the possibility... well, of pregnant companions who risk abortion while engaging in manoeuvres. In the Revolu-

tionary Womens Law [One of the revolutionary laws promulgated by the EZLN in the liberated territories - translators] it is stated explicitly that a woman has full rights over her body and her life. Radical feminists have been fighting throughout the world to truly have control over their lives and bodies. However, the issue becomes very confused when an article appears in the media, in a paper like *La Jornada*, saying that the EZLN has presented a law proposal to the governor of Chiapas in which abortion is addressed, but at no time does it make clear in the media the position of the EZLN concerning the issue. I don't know if it was intentional or if there really was no in-depth knowledge about your position, but the media assumed that the EZLN is opposed to abortion. Thus, I would like to divide the question in several parts. The first question would be: What is the proposal of the Zapatistas in relation to the legalization of abortion? And the second question is: At this time, if a companion-*era* becomes pregnant because her contraceptive method fails and she does not wish to carry the pregnancy to term, if she wants to interrupt it, does she have authority over her body in order to decide if she aborts or not? And the third question...

Marcos: Wait, wait, let's start with the first question.

Interviewers: Well, yes, let's go question by question. The first one is: What does this law proposal consist of?

Marcos: The EZLN demands that the state's penal code be modified because there is no political freedom. The government, taking advantage of the fact that we are tied up in talks and that we are surrounded, is taking the opportunity to reverse the decriminalization of abortion that existed in the Penal Code. They say that this is at the EZLN's request, but the EZLN did not request the modification of the

compan-*eros* have already decided for one of the options. Only after consulting everyone can the Committee say, "We have asked everyone and this is the result..." The Committee cannot say, "We consulted the majority and..." This could cost you your life. You can't play games here, but in any way, we were not a guerrilla group, but an army, an army with territory, with troops, with a general strategic plan. Our initial plan was a defensive plan, a plan in which the companions could participate in one of three different ways: as part of the regular combat force that lives in the mountains, as part of the irregular combat force that lives and works in the communities, or as part of a reserve force composed of the elderly and children. These last also receive military training. At last, we were arrived to the point where we were able to mobilize five thousand people and concentrate them in a village as part of a military exercise. What was it that made this possible? A centralized command? No! Rather, it was that decisions of this kind were made by consensus or consultation. It is more than consultation, it is not a consultation in order to see what you think but more to ask, "What do you want to happen?" The purpose of this is to give power those who should have power. Then, in this interweaving, in this exchange between two different forms of decision-making, the most orthodox proposals of Marxism or Leninism, theoretical concepts or historical references - for example, that the vanguard of the revolution is the proletariat, that the taking of state power and the installation of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the aim of the revolution - were confronted by an ideological tradition that is, how can I say this, somewhat magical. It is magical in one sense, but very real in another. What I mean by this is that it is an ideological tradition born of war - in this case, the war of the Conquest that began, well, not ex-

we understood that if we did anything without consulting them, we would lose them. And this flow, this increase of men and women who left the communities in order to enter the mountains, made us realize that we couldn't draw a solid line between combatant forces and civilian forces. Even geographically this line had broken down. There were military units that didn't live in the mountains but that instead lived in the communities and participated in communal labours. They gave military instruction, but they also participated in the work of the communities. When we reflect on this now it isn't a question of "us" and "them" - now "we" are the entire community. It was necessary to organize, to establish this collective authority along side the absurdity of a vertical, authoritarian structure. Then, it was possible to divide the process of making decisions. I mean by this that strategic decisions, important decisions have to be made democratically, from below, not from above. If there is going to be an action or series of actions that are going to implicate the entire organization, the authority has to come from below. In this sense, even the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee isn't able to make every decision. You could say that the EZLN is different because in most political-military organizations there is only one commander, and in the EZLN the Clandestine Committees are composed of 80 people, 100 people, 120 people or however many. But this is not the difference. The difference is that even the Clandestine Committees cannot make certain decisions, the most important decisions. They are limited to such a degree that the Clandestine Committees cannot decide which path the organization is going to follow until every companion-*ero* is consulted. In the EZLN a decision cannot be made until everyone is consulted, even if it appears that the majority of the

actly five hundred years ago, and that continues through different historical periods. It continues . . . it continues, and it grows. If we had been orthodox leftists, we would never have worked with indigenous peoples. Now, today, I believe there are many theories in crisis. Who would have thought that it would be the indigenous peoples who would provoke all of this? Not even in the Leninist conception of the weakest link was it thought that it might be the indigenous people, right? I told you that there was a learning process at the beginning of our work here, albeit a forced one. It's not like we said, "Well, we are going to learn and see what happens." No! We were close-minded, like any other orthodox leftist, like any other theoretician who believes that he knows the truth.

Interviewers: Even in "pure" Marxism there is discrimination against indigenous people.

Marcos: Yes! Definitely. The events of this last January will bring changes at the theoretical level as well. We arrived here and we were confronted by this reality, the indigenous reality, and it continues to control us. Ultimately the theoretical confronted the practical, and something happened - the result was the EZLN. Therefore our combatants are right when they say, "We are not Marxist-Leninists, we are Zapatistas." They are referring to this synthesis, this coming together, this compatibility that incorporates - I'm going to be very schematic - the historical traditions of struggle and resistance of indigenous people and the necessity of a national revolution.

Interviewers: Excuse me for interrupting. This is exactly the meaning of the initial question: whether you believe that Magonismo has permeated the Zapatista movement. Let's look at the history of the Mexican revolution, in which Mago'n, who was also a descendent of indigenous

people, of indigenous parents in Oaxaca, had a similar vision. He took into account the needs of the indigenous peoples and didn't limit himself to saying, "Those poor Indians!" but also assumed the responsibility of analysing how to create an army with indigenous bases, an army with a collective participation in the command structures. This is the point of the first question: do you believe that Magonismo has permeated the ideological formation of the EZLN?

Marcos: Look, I have to be honest.

When we talk about Magonismo, it also makes me think of the orthodox line, close-minded and stupid. This is the truth. The Mago'n brothers are only talked about in the context of the labour movement, although we know that they developed many other important projects as well. But, ultimately, the unintentional result is that they are talked of in this. We referred to the Flores Mago'n brothers in order to highlight the need for the workers to participate in the revolution, and in order to highlight an important force that existed during the time previous to the outbreak and spread of the armed struggle in 1910-21. Ultimately, this synthesis or confrontation that I am speaking of occurred in such a way that the EZLN was born without any links to the workers. I think that perhaps the synthesis was not enough. Probably it could have used more influence from Mago'n. It probably lacked more input from the history of the Mexican worker's movement so as to be able to truly incorporate the workers into the armed struggle. I'm not saying that we didn't consider this on a theoretical level, but evidently in practice nothing happened. This is to say that there was an error, not in the reality - I can't say, "Reality is stupid because it doesn't suit what I am thinking." It means that we were stupid because we didn't understand reality.

Interviewers: In this sense, the Zapatista movement and the Zapatista revolu-

and the sexist attitudes that we hold.

Marcos: Definitely! There are compan-eros who are very revolutionary politically, but who are real assholes in relationships, in marriages, in relationships between men and women. But, I believe that changes in this aren't going to be our concession - I'm speaking as a man. The women are going to change things whether we like it or not, despite our close-mindedness. It is the same thing as we are doing with respect to the government. The government doesn't like the fact that the indigenous peoples have risen up, but we did it. The sexists don't like the fact that the women are doing what they are doing, but they are going to do it and that's that. They have fought in combat, they even won. Some of them led successful missions, they won, they defeated men. They commanded entire units of men. The EZLN is composed of about two-thirds men and one-third women. It is very common to have military units where the only woman is the commander, the entire unit, all of her subordinates are men. This caused many problems before January first.

Interviewers: And these problems were eliminated?

Marcos: They finally saw that yes, that what was important wasn't that they were women but that they had learned during their years in the mountains to lead the same as any man.

Interviewers: We have seen this. We have met many women captains during our stay here in the liberated territories. We have met many female captains and this demonstrates the truth of what you are saying.

Marcos: The male captains hide themselves [laughter]. No, that's not true.

Interviewers: Continuing along this same subject. . . We have seen that there is also a cultural difference, a difference in tradition. You said this also, at the begin-

ning when you spoke of your links to the indigenous communities. Many of the compan-eras have told us that they aren't allowed to have sex until they are married, that there is a regulation that says that they must be married. If they like a man and they want to sleep with him, it's easier to marry him. We're not speaking of a religious marriage, but that you, the EZLN, expedite some form of marriage. . . But we feel this to be a little puritanical, as if to say, "You can't have sex because you are a woman and you have to be married."

Marcos: No, no, it's that marriage for us means that you are a couple and you have permission. Let me explain. When you are going to have a sexual relationship. . . During the day you can't have sex, you're working. The most logical thing is that you are going to sleep with someone at night. You have to advise the commander that you are going to be having sex somewhere, because if you are attacked the commander has to look for you and. . . We tell the combatants, "You have to trust the commanders to tell them that you are sleeping with someone." Why? It doesn't matter to me, I'm not going to watch you, I'm not a voyeur. It isn't like that. What I'm interested in is that I have someone covering your position. If we are attacked, we can't have the entire defensive line having sex. Well, it could happen, but it shouldn't happen. We don't demand that they are married.

Interviewers: You mean a woman can have sexual relations freely?

Marcos: Yes, what she is told is to follow a birth-control method. That's why she is told to let us know, so that she can follow a method. Because if you become pregnant. . . you can't stay in the mountains pregnant, you have to go to town, go about there. It has already happened, there are compan-eras that abort on the long walks that. . . Then, the method has to be

married. If she is married, then she doesn't dance because now she is somebody's "property." Amongst the civilians it is still this way. Amongst the combatants, no, the combatants dance whether they are married or single, and it is very common that the woman chooses her dancing partner. They dance just to dance, to have fun, without any other motive such as to sleep with someone or have a relationship. The politics of gender in the EZLN, among the regular forces... There isn't a politic of gender, there are only combatants. There are women soldiers and there are men soldiers, but in the end they are soldiers. In order to rise to a command position, in order to rise in rank or to carry out actions and missions, we take into account the soldier's aptitudes; it doesn't matter whether they are male or female. Many times, in our daily life as combatants, in couple relationships, sexist attitudes are reproduced and because of this our laws tend to favour the woman. It is very common for couples to fight physically when they fight. Let's say that the difference between the women combatants and civilian women is that the women combatants hit back [laughter].

Interviewers: They defend themselves.

Marcos: Yes, it's common that it's the man who comes to us complaining that his partner hit him. We have to be very cautious in this respect because both are armed, if it occurs to one of them to shoot the other... A blow is much different than a gunshot. For us - for me it's very clear, and I believe that it's clear to many compan-eras as well - that equality isn't something that's conceded. You can't say, "I as a man am going to give you your freedom and now we are going to be equal." That's not true, of course. In the same way, the government can't concede us our rights as indigenous peoples, we have to fight for them. The women are also

fighting for them, many times in very radical ways. I believe that they've achieved many things inside the combat forces and inside the civilian population. For example, men who had never received orders from a woman, who couldn't stand it when women would give them orders in the mountains... When they saw them fighting, they saw that the compan-eras knew how to fight. They look on them with respect now because they realized that the women knew how to fight and they didn't. They saw them facing death and they stopped being women. They stopped being women in the classic sense of the term, weak and unable to...

Interviewers: Women in the pejorative sense.

Marcos: It could be also that you see a woman and you think that she's only there to sleep with. But when it changes to, "She's going to give me orders and I have to obey her," or "I'm going to give her orders and she is going to obey me," in that moment you stop being a female combatant or a male combatant and you become a soldier, equals. I'm not saying that the women stop being women and become men, but that both women and men stop being what they are and become combatants. Since we are soldiers all the time - we aren't able to take vacations - it is very difficult to tell when one is acting in the role of combatant and when one is off-duty. I believe that this has brought more benefits to the compan-eras than to the sexist, to us men, in the sense that this equality in combat, in work is transmitted to other aspects of life.

Interviewers: Do you accept the analysis that we live in a patriarchal society, that men have controlled society for centuries and that this is also part of the system that feeds Capital, that feeds the bourgeoisie?

Marcos: Definitely!

Interviewers: We must rise above this

have a proposal for the nation. The same or better or worse - it's open for discussion - as any other proposal that intellectuals or political parties or social groups have for this country.

Interviewers: We don't want to deviate much from the questions that we planned to ask you, but now that you have brought up the term "Nation"... There have been many discussions regarding this concept. Even within the discussions of postmodernism the term "Nation" continues to be marked by a petit-bourgeois conception. The "Nation" is used as an abstract feeling of a patriotism that ultimately does nothing more than pit us against one another, country against country. And in this sense, we have felt a certain distance, for example, between points such as the autonomy of the indigenous peoples and the national proposals of which you speak. We would like it if you could tell us a little of the vision of which you speak. When you refer to your national proposals, is it with this bourgeois vision of the nation-state-fatherland, or are you merely using a language a little, well, we could say, more common - something more direct and easier to understand?

Marcos: When we speak of the nation we are necessarily speaking of history, of a history of common struggle with historical references that make us brothers to one group of people without distancing us from other groups. But what more do we have in common with the history of what is today called Mexico? I say this because the first accusation against Zapatismo is that it is aligned with Central America. Therefore it has to delineate itself and explain that its vision is not directed towards the south, but rather towards the north. That is to say, that historical tradition which has brought it together with a group of people - in this case with the Mexican people, not with the Central American peoples. Because...

tion have been called the first postmodernist revolution. Now, let's analyse the fact that many current theories of the new left, of an anti-authoritarian left with a definite tendency toward libertarian communism, break with the blueprint that sees the working class as the vanguard of the social revolution. Many of these new theories even see the working class as a class in decline, a class that does not recognize itself as a class, a class that less and less wants to be considered the working class. Is this conception of the working class one that you have adopted during your experiences?

Marcos: No, definitely not. Those idols against which we were fighting were different. The idea that armed struggle was possible in all places except Mexico was so omnipresent that we were obligated to confront it first and leave the rest for later. Beyond this, in historical or theoretical terms, who would have speculated before December 31, 1993 that it wasn't going to be the proletariat leading the revolution. Then who? Who was it going to be? They could have speculated that it would be the teachers, they could have speculated that it would be the unemployed, they could have speculated that it would be the students or some sector of the middle class, they could have speculated that it would be leftist or democratic factions within the Federal army or within the supposedly democratic faction of the PRI. They could have speculated many things, including that the United States would become socialist and then they would invade us and make us socialists [laughter]. This was the reasoning then. Even in the university this idea had taken root. It didn't occur to anyone that the indigenous peoples were going to play this role and that they would manage to demand their place in the nation or that they would demand that the nation recognize that they have a proposal, that they

remember that the other thing being said is that this revolution is the last Central America revolution. Some say it is the first postmodern revolution, others say that it is the last Central America revolution, even geographically speaking. What occurs as a result of this insistence... when the concept of autonomy is brought up, the State understands it in this way: "Well, what the indigenous peoples want are reservations, like the ones North American Indians have." This is where the *companion-eras* say, "No, if we are going to end up like the North American Indians on reservations, no." This is not the concept of autonomy that we want, rather that they recognize, for example, this structure of government that I have explained, a structure that gives us validity. We don't want them to operate as if they were conquering territory. When the federal army entered the communities before the war, or the judicial police or the public security police, or the municipal police, they entered as an invading army in enemy territory, even physically. When an army invades a country, everyone from that country is an enemy. When they entered the communities, they entered acting as if everyone were an enemy. At that point, the *companion-eras* said, "We have our own forms of government, we have traditions of community decision-making that must be respected by the government. And not only that - these traditions are a good example for the national government, for the government of this country, for any government that pretends to be a democracy." For this reason we speak of Mexico, of the Mexican nation, because we must mark our boundaries, we must say, "It is not nostalgia for Central America, it is not nostalgia for Nicaragua, nostalgia for El Salvador." On the other hand, when they speak of autonomy they are speaking as sectarians. They don't look to the future but to the past, the nostalgia... They look to ethnicity

in a pejorative sense, as if we wanted to create a bubble, a bubble like the one in the movie, a bubble that isolates you from contamination or from what happens outside it. Therefore, any concept that you put out there... We must make clear what we are speaking of in all senses. Interviewers: From our point of view... We felt a little shocked by the discrepancy in your positions. For example, what is put forward as the "nation" of Mexico we understand to be very similar to what indigenous peoples understand to be the "nation" of the United States.

It is a large nation that dominates a large number of indigenous peoples, of small indigenous nations. In this case they may be Choles, Tzotzils, Triquis, Yaguas. The same thing happens in the case of the United States. It is a large nation that has oppressed a large number of small nations, such as the Yaguas, the Pomos, the Apaches, the Dakotas, etc. And in this sense we understand Mexico to be an imperialist nation that has kept all of these peoples oppressed without recognizing their culture, their traditions, their identities, a nation that has imposed a culture and an identity and that is trying to maintain the entire territory under its control without the least respect for cultures, traditions, identities or anything of the kind. This then we see as a kind of contradiction, speaking of a national project... Well, we can see it in history with the example of Lazaro Cardenas when he was in the army. He went to war against the Yaqui, no? And this was to massacre and oppress the Yaqui people, a people who were in rebellion and who had not allowed themselves to be oppressed, a people who were one of the bastions of resistance against the so-called "New Nation." Therefore, we see a contradiction. I don't know if you have given thought to this, if you have come across this contradiction in your experiences.

Mexico as the rearguard for political solidarity work. Now I'm remembering something: let's see if this relates to the question - it will make the tape recorder jump. We just received a feminist magazine that says that we are sexist because we chose war and war is sexist, armies are in and of themselves sexist, so therefore the EZLN is sexist. Therefore, what the EZLN needs is to be feminist. The article was brilliant - it moved me to tears. I don't remember what it was called - it was written by "pure" feminists. The article goes beyond anything I've seen.

Interviewers: La Fem? [Mexican feminist magazine - translators]
Marcos: No.

Interviewers: Is it national?

Marcos: No, it appeared to be...

Interviewers: Well, on that note, I'm going skip around in the order of the questions.

Marcos: No, it's that the article says... the forward says, "Only for Zapatista women." And I disobeyed and read it, but I will pass it along to the *companion-eras*.

Interviewers: Well, one of the things that we are most concerned about - specifically the *companion-eras* - are the gender politics within the EZLN. You facilitated our being able to interview a number of *companion-eras* and we have seen - to the point that you have allowed us to see [laughs] - that there exists an equality. This can be seen clearly. The women say it themselves: "My partner," - or in the case of those who are married - "My husband washes his things, does his work, does his part." And when you ask her if she has children, she says, "Yes, I already have mine, my M-16." Things like this show that yes, there is an equality that exists, at least in practice. The single *companion-eras* that we've interviewed also tell us they do the same work as the men, that they aren't limited to working as nurses or in the

kitchen as a result of being women. We would like you to tell us, as spokesperson of the EZLN: What are the politics of the EZLN towards gender issues?

Marcos: Look, there are many problems. I am speaking of the *companion-eras*, above all in the civilian population, the civilians have continued practising many ancestral customs that don't belong in even a pre-revolutionary situation. For example, many still believe that the man should choose the woman that he wants to marry, but that the woman should have no choice in the matter. The difference, including the physical difference, between the civilian women and the combatant women is very clear. At the age when many of the combatant women have, as you say, an M-16, many civilian women already have four or five children, are beaten by their husbands, they don't know how to read or write, they have no opportunity to develop themselves as people. What the *companion-eras* say is that they cannot have their equality decreed from above, they have to achieve it through struggle. They say, "You can like it or not, but now we are going to change these things." By force. That's why in our list of demands to the government, it doesn't mention anything about gender. The *companion-eras* say, "We aren't going to ask the government to give us freedom, nor are we going to ask you male fools. We are going to ensure our freedom, our respect and our dignity as women and as human beings." I'm speaking of the *companion-eras*... They also criticize us, the men, for our sexist or authoritarian attitudes. For example, in relationships between combatants, many things have changed, things that haven't changed in the civilian population. For example, in the civilian population, when a woman marries, she is no longer allowed to dance. She is married, and dances are places where single people meet and decide to get

here's a party. They lack a leader, so here's a leader." This attitude is held by everyone from Aguilar Talamantes [Presidential candidate of the Partido Frente Cardenista de Reconstrucción Nacional - translators] to the left.

Interviewers: Yes, he already wanted you to be a candidate for president, right?

Marcos: No, first he wanted to be our candidate for the presidency. [laughs]

Interviewers: Later he wanted you to be the candidate.

Marcos: Yes, but he made it very difficult. First I had to prove that I was more intelligent than he was.

Interviewers: Really? Imagine. Impossible.

Marcos: Evidently it was impossible.

Interviewers: Going back to the previous discussion, Dr. Armando Quiroz

Alejandro of the ANDH [Asamblea Nacional de Derechos Humanos] met with comrades of the Zapatista Solidarity Committee in New York City. During the visit, he insinuated in private discussions with these comrades that PROCUP has a link to the EZLN and furthermore that the EZLN is following the same political line as PROCUP.

Marcos: It's not true, those people need to be publicly denounced. It can't be. Why should the Zapatistas provide the dead bodies and the other groups collect the dollars and fool people into thinking that they're providing solidarity for an organization that never receives any of this aid? We don't subscribe to their ideologies - in this case the ideology of PROCUP. We definitely don't subscribe. If we subscribed to the ideology of PROCUP, well, we would be PROCUP. We are not, we are not in anyway in league with them, we have not even entered in any kind of conversation with them since our inception, since their inception. There is absolutely no type of alliance. Well, in the sense that we

are all human beings, you could also [laughs] link us to Clinton or to Reagan, to Perot, to Che, to Zapata.

Interviewers: With anybody. Now that we are clearing some things up. There have been other groups that have manipulated things in a different way. Specifically in the case of CLETA [leftist culture and arts group in Mexico City - translators], who said, for example, that you are their vanguard. This is the opposite of PROCUP. CLETA needed a vanguard and put you in that position. Furthermore, as we are talking about the problem of solidarity, they are one of the groups that has organized concerts and collected funds saying that they are for you, saying that it is for... that this aid reaches you, that this money reaches you.

Marcos: Well, we're going to wait until it arrives. But, up until now nothing has arrived [laughs].

Interviewers: Nothing has arrived. A number of very biased press sources have tried to equate the EZLN with the Shining Path [Communist Party of Peru - Shining Path - translators]. Making a simply objective analysis you can see that both groups are very different. For example, while the Shining Path has committed innumerable executions, you [the EZLN] tried a criminal like Absalom [former governor of Chiapas taken prisoner by the Zapatistas during the January fighting - translators] and you put him to work in the corn fields and in the end you freed him. We would like it if you could expound on this because there are Maoists who say that you part of the international Maoist revolution, that there is a link between the Shining Path and the Zapatista Army, etc., etc.

Marcos: No, there is no link. Look, if the Mexicans couldn't accept that an armed revolution was possible in Mexico, definitely foreigners couldn't accept the possibility. Come on, everyone saw or still sees

it developed, but it aspires to organize the workers, non-indigenous peasants, students, teachers, and all of the other social sectors in order to carry out a broader revolution, not just an indigenous revolution. We don't believe that the result of this revolution that we are proposing will be a new world, a new country; it will only be a first step, an antechamber that you enter before you enter this new country. We are proposing a space, an equilibrium between the different political forces in order that each position has the same opportunity to influence the political direction of this country - not by backroom deals, corruption or blackmail, but by convincing the majority of the people that their position is best. I mean by this... If there is a neoliberal proposal for the country, we shouldn't try to eliminate it but confront it. If there is a Trotskyite proposal, a Maoist proposal, an anarchist proposal, or proposals from the Guevaristas, the Castristas, the Existentialists or whatever "ists" that you may think of, they shouldn't be eliminated. They shouldn't be discussed in the way we are discussing them now, in small groups. In this discussion, we are demonstrating that we know a lot, that we speak very prettily, but in the discussions that we are proposing... the rest of the country shouldn't be spectators, like they will be to the debate tomorrow [On May 12, for the first time in Mexican history, the presidential candidates of the major Mexican political parties engaged in an open, televised debate - translators]

The people have to decide what proposal to accept, and it's the people who you have to convince that your opinion is correct. This will radically change the concept of revolution, of who the revolutionary class is, of what a revolutionary organization is. Now, the problem isn't in fighting against the other proposals, but instead in trying to convince the people. It's because

Marcos: No, this is your position, but since this is my interview, I am going to explain ours. Look, we believe that today's Mexico, the Mexico that we are fighting against, is not a Mexico in abstract but rather a project of a certain class, of a certain social group. This project was born of the disorder or of the internal agreement provoked by the revolution at the beginning of this century. The implementation of this project has brought about a series of things as you indicate: domination, questions of land, of forms of government. For example, the lie that there is a federation when in reality the states depend upon the central government, or the lie that there are free municipalities when in reality the municipalities are dependent. We believe that it is possible to have the same Mexico with a different project, a project that recognizes not only that it is a multi-ethnic state - in fact, multi-national - but also that new concepts are needed in order to reform the constitution. But, since there isn't a just relationship between the federation and its parts, we are proposing autonomy. We are proposing this because we are mostly indigenous people but what we say with respect to the need for autonomy could be applied equally to the municipalities, to the unions, to social groupings, to peasant groups, to the governments of the states or to the states that are nominally free and sovereign inside the federation. Interviewers: Could it be said that you view the future society for which you are fighting as one in which the free municipality, the autonomous municipality will be put into practice, a society in which a federation will be put into practice based upon a citizen's confederation?

Marcos: No, before this we have to complete the other revolution. The EZLN... The revolution that we are proposing isn't an indigenous revolution. The EZLN was born with indigenous demands due to how

of this that the Zapatista revolution isn't proposing the taking of power, it isn't proposing a homogeneous ideological concept of revolution. We are saying that yes, we do have our idea of how the country should be, but something is lacking before we talk about this. We cannot replicate the same logic as the government. They have a vision for the country that they have imposed on the people with the arms of the Federal Army. We cannot reverse this logic and say that now the Zapatista vision is going to be imposed on the people with the arms of the Zapatista army. We are saying, "Let's destroy this State, this State system. Let's open up this space and confront the people with ideas, not with weapons." This is why we propose democracy, freedom and justice - justice in order that certain material conditions are satisfied so that people have an opportunity to participate in the political life of the country. We are saying, "We don't want this new world yet. We are not talking about a new world yet. We aren't talking about what form Article 27 should take. We aren't talking about what form the federation agreement should take. We aren't talking about what form indigenous autonomy should take. We are talking about a democratic space where the political parties, or groups that aren't parties, can air and discuss their social proposals."

Interviewers: Marcos, in analysing the way in which you are organized - at least what you have let us see - it's evident that when you speak of democracy, you are referring to direct democracy, to total participation, to a participation in which each and every person that makes up this country, everyone that is living at this time in Mexico, can participate. Is this interpretation accurate?

Marcos: Yes. Definitely. Look, what we are trying to do... We are a clandestine organization that has taken up arms against

the government, and still we are very careful to try and maintain this democracy. By this I mean the direct vote, everyone's vote. Yes, because only the Zapatistas can vote. It's not the kind of process where you arrive and ask the people, "Are you for war or are you for peace? Well, I'm for war. And you? Peace." And you go adding up the votes. No, I tell you that it must be the logical outcome of community discussion.

The people meet in assemblies and the representatives put forth, for example in the case of the consultations, the demands of the EZLN and the response of the government. They're explained. What is it that we asked for and what has the government said in response? And they begin to debate, "Well, this is bad and this is good." After the community says, "We have already debated, we already understand, now we can vote" - this could take days. In fact, almost all the consultations have gone on for two, three days now and they haven't yet reached the point of voting. They arrive and say, "Well okay, we are in agreement, let's vote if we are ready to vote, if we already understand what it is we are going to decide." It's not about raising your hand or putting a check-mark for one option or the other. You have to debate and analyse the pros and the cons. In this case you're not voting for a governor where he could turn out to be a son of a bitch, you're voting for your life or death as an organization. If you're at war you already know that you could live or die. But, if you err in a decision and you vote for war when it is time for peace or you vote for peace when it is time for war, you disappear as an organization. You might disappear because they destroy you, because you lose prestige or moral authority, or because you become a traitor to yourself by signing a fictitious peace that nobody wants. You can't leave decisions of this magnitude to a group of leaders no matter how collective they are or

how large the group is. Not even the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee can decide these things. The Committee can't meet and decide. "We analysed what Camacho [Commissioner for Peace and Reconciliation in Chiapas-translators] said and we are going to decide yes or no." They can't do that.

Interviewers: Do you strive for consensus in the general assemblies?

Marcos: No, there is direct voting. It isn't the sort of voting where at the end they say, "The majority of the people voted yes and therefore it's yes for all the people." No, it has to be known how many said yes and how many said no, because these yeses and nos are added up proportionally. It's not the consensus of the government, for example, that says, "Well, nobody said no [laughs] so we have consensus. Are you in agreement? Nobody said they didn't agree so that means that you agree." No, it has to be a direct vote.

Interviewers: We want to ask you another question that deals with ground that's already been covered to some extent, since it's been made clear during the interview that the EZLN has never considered itself to be the vanguard of the Mexican revolutionary movement. Nevertheless, I need to ask this question directly because other groups, specifically PROCUUP [Partido Revolucionario Obrero

Clandestino - Union del Pueblo], have said that they are the vanguard of Zapatismo, that they as a party are the vanguard of Zapatismo. PROCUUP recently circulated a document where they implied that the EZLN is one of their "belligerent groups," and that all the recent events in Mexico are part of PROCUUP's national plan, of which, logically, they are the vanguard. Is this true? Do you have some connection?

Marcos: The left is very close-minded. The traditional left is very close-minded. They say, "Well, these people don't draw

from any of the known ideologies, so they must not have one. I will lend them one." [laughs]. Or they say, "They are good people but they don't know what they want." Or "I'm going to tell them what they want." Or "They're good people but they need a leader. I'll be their leader." This is the reality not just in the case of PROCUUP, but with groups of Trotskyites and Maoists who say, "What the EZLN needs is... ME!" [laughs].

Interviewers: My leadership.

Marcos: Yes, ultimately, "my leadership." What upsets the Pentagon is that when you punch "Zapatista" into the computer, nothing comes out that says, "Moscow," or "Havana," or "Libya," "Tripoli," "Bosnia" or any other group. And the left, accustomed to the same way of thinking, says, "Well, they don't fit in anywhere." It doesn't occur to them there might be something new, that you have to retheorize. And they say, "Well then, these poor people don't know what they want, we need to help them." And furthermore, we are talking about an armed force at war, surrounded, that isn't able to receive all the declarations or the newspapers. Eventually, we find out what is said after a week or maybe 15 days. So, they know that we will not be able to deny it. We can't stop it. But, we believe that... we have confidence in the people, in the community, in that we have been clear about our positions and that people will have difficulty swallowing that we are the armed arm of PROCUUP or of any other organization of any type. But I have seen various magazines...

Interviewers: Very insidious... the commentaries.

Marcos:... of Trotskyites and Maoists, of all of the orthodox leftists and of the old dinosaurs that say, "Well, the EZLN is very good and what they've done is very good and all, but they lack a program, so here's a program. They lack a party, so